The Death Mistake

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The Death Mistake

by peacefrog

Summary

The impact is far less painful than Will imagined it would be. In fact, it doesn't hurt at all. He opens his eyes, still clinging to Hannibal's shoulders, and is blinded by the intensity of the lights beating down on him.

Notes

"The French Mistake" Hannibal AU. Thank you to othermemesofinfluence and granpappy-winchester for the prompts that inspired this story! Their original prompts can be found on tumblr here and here.

Chapter 1

The impact is far less painful than Will imagined it would be. In fact, it doesn't hurt at all. He opens his eyes, still clinging to Hannibal's shoulders, and is blinded by the intensity of the lights beating down on him.

"Amazing work, guys," a voice he doesn't recognize shouts. "I think that's a wrap for the day."

One moment they were plunging to their deaths, and now, as Will releases his grip on Hannibal, he sees they're lying on a mat, surrounded by strangers and bright lights.

"Will," Hannibal says, sitting up. "Is that a camera?"

They make it to their feet, and before Will even has a chance to glance all the way around the room, a man approaches, beaming at them both.

"Hugh, Mads, phenomenal work." The voice from earlier now has a face, a man with shaggy grey hair and glasses claps both Will and Hannibal on the shoulder. "Bryan is going to flip when he sees the dailies."

"Hugh?" Will furrows his brow as the man walks away. "Mads?"

The pain that was radiating from Will's stab wounds is suddenly non-existent. He gropes at his chest, his shoulder, and while he finds plenty of blood, he feels no obvious injuries beneath his fingers. He touches his cheek, the gash where the dragon's blade sunk in nowhere to be felt.

Hannibal does the same, inspecting his own abdomen, feeling around on his back. There are entry and exit wounds in his blood-soaked sweater, but his flesh is intact, completely unmarred.

"Will," Hannibal drawls, slowly scanning the room. "I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

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"Apparently," Will says, staring at Hannibal over the top of the laptop screen. "This is a television show."

"That would explain the camera, and all those lights."

"And this trailer." Will feels his stomach turn as he continues to read. "Will Graham is a fictional character and the protagonist of Thomas Harris' 1981 novel Red Dragon. In the television series Hannibal, he is portrayed by Hugh Dancy."

"That's you."

“According to this, yes.” Will is fairly certain they’ve landed in the ninth circle of the inferno. “Oh… I’m an English actor. Why don’t I have an accent? I have a wife?”

“And a child, apparently,” Hannibal says, joining Will in front of the screen.

“This can’t be real.” Will continues scrolling. “Your name is Mads Mikkelsen. You’re Danish…”

“With a wife and two children.”

“How is this possible?” Will closes the laptop. He wants to snap his eyes shut, wishing for the rush of waves.

“I’m not sure,” Hannibal says. “But I don’t think it’s wise for either of us to stick around long enough to find out.”

“What about our families?”

“They are not our families,” Hannibal says, pulling Will to his feet. “Come with me.”

“Yeah,” Will sighs, grabbing the jacket slung across the back of the couch. “Okay. Let’s get out of here.”

Chapter 2

Hugh doesn't recall the last several falls going on for quite this long. In fact, they should have made impact with the mat below almost instantly. Instead, he feels the undeniable rush of open air all around him, tightening his grip on Mads' shoulders as he opens his eyes.

He lets out a shocked scream that is immediately swallowed up by the swirling blackness that surrounds them. They are falling, falling, falling… The impact is like a thousand angry knives piercing his skin.

Water, up his nose and flooding his eyes, gulping down great mouthfuls as he struggles to keep his head above the surface. Once he's certain he can move his arms and legs, he panics for a moment when he realizes that, upon impact, he lost his grip on Mads.

"Mads!" Hugh shouts above the deafening crash of waves, frantically spinning in the water, searching for any sight of his friend. He spots him several feet away, clinging to the side of a jagged rock.

"What's happening?!" Mads shouts as Hugh paddles over.

"I don't know," Hugh says. "Are you hurt?"

"I can't feel my fingers or my toes," Mads says, lips trembling. "I don't know. Everything hurts."

"We need to try to find dry land." Hugh grips Mads' arm as they pull away from the rock, floating out into open water.

They swim for what feels like days, their bodies battered against the cliff face as they search frantically for the shore. When, finally, Hugh spots it, he's got his arm hooked around Mads' chest. He practically drags him from the water. They both collapse face-down on the narrow swath of gravel and sand, shivering and gasping for breath.

"I think I've been shot," Mads croaks out, groping at his belly as he flips onto his back.

Hugh frantically reaches up to inspect his own face. "Fuck," he says. "How…"

"It's so cold." Mads' whole body is trembling next to him.

"Come here," Hugh says, rolling until their bodies make contact. They cling to each other, shivering, bleeding, terrified, the morning sun peaking out just above the horizon.

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They find a boat docked nearby. After breaking into the cabin, they huddle together on the small bed, swaddled in blankets.

"This can't be happening," Hugh says. "Fuck, it's so cold."

“Get in here,” Mads says, lifting his blanket in open invitation.

Hugh shucks his off, pressing against Mads’ side as they cuddle up beneath the blanket. “Better,” he says. “Now please help me figure out what the hell is happening.”

“You know what happened.”

“I know we were filming and then we were falling,” Hugh says. “I found a passport in a box next to the blankets.”

“And?”

“And it’s yours.” Hugh presses the passport into Mads’ hand. “Only it’s not. It’s your picture but not your name. Do you know a Stephen McLaughlin?”

“Fuck,” Mads says, gazing at the photo of himself. “I think… I think this is Hannibal’s boat.”

“That doesn’t make any sense,” Hugh huffs out a nervous laugh. “It’s just a show. It isn’t real.”

“We’ve both lost a lot of blood,” Mads says, tossing the blanket off. Hugh clings to him, desperate to continue soaking up his warmth. “Let’s try and clean these wounds before worrying about anything else.”

“If this is Hannibal’s boat,” Hugh says, trying to wrap his head around the logic. “There won’t be a shortage of medical supplies.”

They find a fully stocked first-aid kit, tending to each others wounds with shaking hands, still shivering in their tattered clothes.

“This is going to need stitches,” Hugh says, kneeling between Mads’ legs, pressing gauze to the exit wound in his abdomen. “Hopefully the bullet didn’t hit anything vital.”

“You understand what this means, right?” Mads asks, face a mess of fear and confusion. “If we’re here, that means...”

“That means we’re fugitives.” Hugh begins wrapping a bandage around Mads’ waist. “You are, at the very least.”

“Do you think Will and Hannibal...”

“Don’t say that,” Hugh shakes his head, securing the bandage. “Don’t even think that.”

“It would make sense.”

“Nothing about this makes sense.”

“Do you know how to drive one of these things?” Mads asks as Hugh joins him back on the bed.

“No,” Hugh says, pulling the blanket back around them and snuggling close. “Do you?”

“A little. Enough to manage.”

“Good,” Hugh says, pressing his nose into Mads’ chest, curling his body into the warmth radiating from him. “But don’t let me go just yet.”

“I won’t,” Mads says, pulling Hugh tight against his chest. “I’m scared too, but we have each other. We’re going to figure this out.”

Chapter 3

They dress in a hurry, gathering everything of use from the trailers marked Hugh Dancy and Mads Mikkelsen. Avoiding everyone on set as best they can, they manage to find a driver to take them to Mads' home. On the way, they are able to discern their current location — Toronto, Canada — but confusion still bites Will deep. He wonders if, upon death, everyone is simply thrust into someone else's life.

"Should I drop you by your place, Hugh?" The driver asks, parking next to the building.

"No, that's alright," Will says, ducking his head when the driver throws him a curious look over his shoulder.

"He's wondering where your accent has gone," Hannibal says as they exit the car, retrieving their bags from the trunk.

"Do you have the keys?" Will asks, slinging his bag over his shoulder.

"These were the only keys I found in his trailer," Hannibal says. "Let's hope for the best."

"Let's hope this guy's family isn't inside waiting for him."

"If they are, it shouldn't be a problem."

"No killing," Will says firmly. "And no eating anyone, either. Let's just try and figure out what's happened and get as far away from this place as possible."

—

"It's simple," Hannibal explains, grimacing at the cheap beer he pulls from the fridge. "Our fall must have thrust us into an alternate universe, one where Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham are merely characters in a story."

"Or on a cancelled television show," Will says. "Maybe it wasn't the fall that caused all of this. Maybe in this universe a cancellation throws everything else out of whack."

"Perhaps," Hannibal says, leaning against the counter. "But television shows get cancelled all the time."

"Maybe there was something different about this one," Will lifts his shirt. "Look at this. All my scars are gone. All of yours are, too. It's like we've been body swapped."

"The characters in this show wanted so badly to go on after their cancellation, they were thrust out into the world."

"Only we aren't characters. We're real people, Hannibal." Will buries his face in his hands.

“In our universe, we are.” Hannibal pulls Will’s hands away from his face, cradling his nape and forcing their eyes to meet. “It is possible we are both real and imagined. If there are infinite universes, the possibilities for our existence are also unlimited.”

“How do we get back to ours?” Will asks, voice barely above a whisper. His skin is on fire where Hannibal’s hand remains.

“It was a very long fall from that cliff,” Hannibal says, thumbing at Will’s ear. “It’s possible our bodies didn’t survive.”

“And if they did?” Will fights the urge to whine when Hannibal removes his hand.

“Then Mads Mikkelsen and Hugh Dancy are in for quite a terrifying surprise.”

—

“Without my contacts or accounts available to me,” Hannibal says, pulling credit cards from Mads’ wallet. “We will need to acquire as much cash as we can, as soon as we can. Without a paper trail, it will be easier for us to leave the country.”

“Wait,” Will says. “You expect us to abscond with not only these bodies that don’t belong to us, but also all of their money?”

“How else are we supposed to get away?”

“I don’t know.” Will sighs, perching on the couch next to Hannibal. “This is all just happening so fast.”

“Then why don’t you just let me take care of the details?” Hannibal turns to him, placing one strong hand on Will’s knee. “You should rest.”

“So should you.”

“Mads has received several calls on his phone from someone named Hanne. I believe, according to what we read online, she is his wife. It would be wise to leave here soon, before she thinks to come looking for him.”

“Alright...” Will sighs, suddenly exhausted to the bone. “Just do me a favor and don’t kill anyone that shows up while I’m asleep. We’re not fugitives in this universe. We'd be smart to keep it that way until we figure this out.”

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